



Gas and Electric Customers' Rights

With utility prices so high this winter, gas and electric customers should be aware of their rights under Illinois Commerce Commission rules designed to protect them from disconnection of heating service in cold weather.

Between December 1 and March 31, a gas or electric public utility cannot terminate heating service for non-payment unless:

- The customer has been offered a payment plan;
- The customer has refused to enter into a payment plan;
- All notice requirements have been met; and
- The temperature is 32°F or higher.

Payment Plans

Customers with delinquent accounts may contact the customer service department of their gas or electric public utility (see monthly bill for the customer service number) and request a payment plan or deferred billing plan. Many of these plans permit customers to spread utility costs out over several months or even a year. Customer service telephone numbers for Illinois' major gas utilities are:

Peoples' Gas Co.	866-556-6001
North Shore Gas Co.	847-336-9300
NICOR	888-642-6748 (NICOR 4 U)
Illinois Power Co.	800-755-5000
Mid-American Energy	888-427-5632
CIPS (Central Illinois Public Service) ..	888-789-2477
CILCO (Central Illinois Light Co.)	888-672-5252 (outside Peoria) 309-672-5252 (in Peoria)

Notice Requirements

During the months of November, December, January, February, and March, a gas or electric public utility must notify the customer of its intention to terminate or cut off service by U.S. Mail at least 8 days prior to termination or by other means at least 5 days prior to termination.

Temperature Restrictions

Termination of gas or electric service where such service is the only source of heating is prohibited on any day that the National Weather Service forecast for the following 24 hours is 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below; termination is also prohibited on any day preceding a holiday or weekend where the forecast for any day during the holiday or weekend is 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Customers should call their gas or electric utility to determine if shut-offs are a possibility when the temperature rises.

Illness Certificates

Illinois Commerce Commission rules also require that utilities not shut off residential service if the utility has received a valid illness certificate. Illness certificates are good for one month and can be

renewed by a doctor or the Board of Health for an additional month. Customers with serious illnesses should ask their utility how to submit an illness certificate.

Assistance Programs

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs provides assistance to qualified applicants through two programs (for information, call 1-800-252-8643; TDD: 1-800-785-6055).

- **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).** This program is designed to help income-eligible households meet the high cost of home energy.
- **Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP).** This program is designed to help income-eligible households conserve fuel and save money by making their homes and apartments energy efficient.

For More Information

For additional information, contact the Illinois Commerce Commission's toll-free customer service line at 1-800-524-0795 or visit www.icc.state.il.us.

Understanding High Natural Gas Prices

Over the past ten years, prices for natural gas have been deregulated. Natural gas prices in Illinois are not established by gas utilities or by the government, but are set according to the market. Gas utility companies purchase natural gas from unregulated suppliers and pass the costs on to consumers. Under current law, Illinois gas utilities are only permitted to make a profit on the delivery of natural gas, not on the sale of natural gas itself, with one exception. One gas company is permitted to share gas cost savings with consumers within strict guidelines set by the Illinois Commerce Commission. These guidelines are tied to the market price of natural gas.

The Attorney General is currently a party to several regulatory investigations that are examining whether gas utility companies have made responsible purchasing and management decisions in order to obtain sufficient stores of natural gas at reasonable prices. If regulators determine that the gas utilities did not act responsibly, they will be ordered to adjust customers' bills downward to reflect reasonable payments made to gas suppliers. The Attorney General's Office is actively participating in these investigations and will take additional action as necessary to protect consumers from unfair utility practices and unreasonable prices.

please visit
www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov



Chicago
1-800-386-5438
TTY: 1-800-964-3013

Springfield
1-800-243-0618
TTY: 877-844-5461

Carbondale
1-800-243-0607
TTY: 877-675-9339